



Flavorful and crisp;
just like ginjo sake

BANRYOKU RIDEN

Made with double the koji and bottled right after dilution without filtering. Enjoy the aroma, flavor, and crispness of ginjo sake in a shochu.

Ingredients: rice koji, rice
ABV: 25%
Distillation method: vacuum



Vacuum distilled shochu
with luxurious aroma and crisp taste

BANRYOKU

Made with house yeast. Vacuum-distilled shochu on par with ginjo sake, with refreshing aroma, robust flavor, and pleasant crispness.

Ingredients: rice, rice koji
ABV: 25%
Distillation method: vacuum



A base of aged sake
matured through unique blending

KODAN MIDORIMATSU

Pure rice shochu with a complex flavor due to *shitsugi* fractional blending, where a base of aged shochu is topped off with younger stock.

Ingredients: rice, rice koji
ABV: 39%
Distillation method: atmospheric

Matsumoto Shuzojo

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THE HISTORY OF
KUMA SHOCHU

Kuma Shochu: Born from the History,
Climate & Culture of Hitoyoshi-Kuma



Abundant Water & Unique Climate

The Kuma Valley is located at the southernmost tip of Kumamoto Prefecture, deep in the mountains of Kyushu. The cool waters of the Kuma River—famed for its rapids—nourish the fields, while the valley's distinctive climate and significant temperature variations create one of the prefecture's prime rice-growing areas. The frequent dense fog in the region allows for fermentation and storage at relatively low temperatures, which helps give Kuma

shochu its refreshing aroma. The soft water from the Kuma River system is ideal for shochu making and helps enhance the gentle sweetness of the rice. The rich aroma and deep flavor of Kuma Shochu can only be produced in the Hitoyoshi-Kuma region.

Tradition & Evolution

Rice shochu production in the Hitoyoshi-Kuma region is believed to have started about 500 years ago. Distillation

techniques were supposedly brought over through trade with southeast and continental Asia. Today, 27 distilleries preserve the traditional techniques honed by their predecessors, offering a variety of flavors that have evolved over time.

In 1995, Kuma Shochu was designated as a Geographical Indication by the National Tax Agency, establishing it as a world-class shochu brand and attracting attention from around the globe.

WHAT IS
KUMA SHOCHU?

- Must be made with rice (including rice koji) grown in Japan
- Mash must be made with Hitoyoshi-Kuma water and shochu must be distilled in a pot still and bottled in Hitoyoshi-Kuma.

Matsumoto Shuzojo

松本酒造場



You must be 20 or older to drink. Do not drink and drive.
Drinking alcohol during pregnancy and breastfeeding may affect the development of the fetus or infant.
Drink in moderation. Please recycle.



Upper left: The distillery faces Route 219.
Upper right: Two people chill the rice for secondary fermentation and add it to the tank when it reaches the right temperature.
Left: Lined with beakers and test tubes, the yeast culture room is just like a chemistry lab.
Right: White clouds from the steamed rice fill the chilly distillery.

■ MATSUMOTO SHUZOJO (Asagiri) ■

From handmade koji to self-cultured yeast—shochu second to none

■ HISTORY
Aroma and flavor that never gets old

Matsumoto Shuzojo was founded in 1908 in the town of Asagiri, Kuma County. The founder moved here from Amakusa, and started growing rice in this fertile land. That rice would eventually be used to make the atmospheric-distilled Midorimatsu shochu.

Fast forward, the fourth president of the company began studying distilled spirits at

a distillery lab in Tokyo in the heady 1960s. At the time, wooden barrels were still used for distillation, and the primary heat source was coal. They used the yellow koji mold usually used to brew traditional sake, which resulted in atmospheric-distilled shochu with an aroma similar to sake. However, everything changed in 1983 with the introduction of vacuum distillation.

In 1989, Japan's liquor laws were revised, allowing more freedom in how

shochu could be priced. After graduating from the brewing and distillation department of Tokyo University of Agriculture, Matsumoto's current president Toshiyuki Matsumoto realized that they needed to do something to distinguish themselves from other distillers. He decided draw upon his research experience at university and began cultivating yeast in-house. What he landed on is a shochu whose smell and taste you'll never stop relishing.

■ ABOUT US
Fermenting with in-house yeast

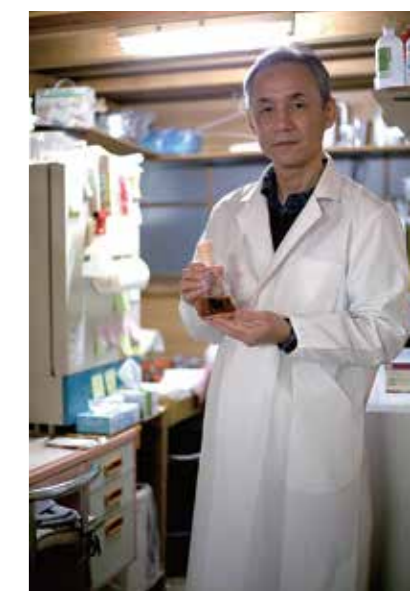
Matsumoto makes its shochu at the coldest time of the year. They use 3-step fermentation, with primary fermentation in earthenware pots, then add steamed rice in two more steps. The entire process is done by hand and requires all five senses.

At the center of the brewery is the wooden yeast cultivation room. It is here that the distillery carefully maintains the yeast using the skills ascertained at Tokyo University of Agriculture. In 1993, Matsumoto produced Banryoku, a vacuum-distilled shochu with a floral aroma using white koji, local Hinohikari rice, and yeast developed in-house. Currently, Banryoku is the distillery's main product.

When Banryoku was brought to market, they made a dramatic change to their sales channels. They partnered with the most discerning liquor retailers and limited sales to only 70 locations from Hokkaido in the north to Miyazaki in the south. Banryoku Gaiden, which uses natural yeast taken from the remains of Hitoyoshi Castle, has been a hit with diehard Kuma Shochu fans.

"Moving forward I want to increase our varieties of yeast and further expand the possibilities of shochu. I want to lower the boundaries between sake and shochu even more," said president Toshiyuki Matsumoto. There are high hopes for a new future of shochu led by self-cultivated yeast.

The fifth president of the company, Toshiyuki Matsumoto in lab attire. Matsumoto enjoyed cooking from a young age and researched yeast at Tokyo University of Agriculture. He hopes to make shochu that transcends generations.



Left: A retro sign for Midorimatsu, another classic shochu. **Center:** The stone koji room that has been used since the company's founding. **Right:** A stack of jars previously used to make shochu.



Fermentation in Hitoyoshi-Kuma is traditionally carried out in earthenware pots. The pots are buried to ensure they are well-insulated and for ease of access to the shochu.